

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

July 26th, 1944

DEAR MEMBER,

In reply to the Master of Balliol, Mr. Douglas Woodruff has sent the following letter to Dr. Oldham.

"As it was the main point of my letter that there *is* in the Christian sociological tradition a most fruitful alternative to the choice between *laissez-faire* and totalitarianism, I was not unnaturally astonished to be told by Dr. A. D. Lindsay that I assume there is no such alternative. As two months have passed, may I remind your readers that my argument was that the corporate bodies lesser than the State—the schools, the hospitals, the professions, the businesses that can be elevated into professions—are the organs we should develop to achieve 'a free society for the ordinary man who would know the limited power of each organization and association.' I wrote this very plainly, if inevitably briefly; it deserves, and still awaits, serious discussion. It is a question of public policy, of the mode of action by which we can avoid the direct and obviously dangerous concentration of powers in State Departments exercising them directly.

"Instead of coming to grips with this choice of the direction in which we should go, Dr. Lindsay proceeds in a fashion which goes down very well on political platforms but is, I think, quite out of place in the Christian New-Letter. I limit myself to two examples. He says that 'as a complacent and secure middle-class person I talk in superior condemnation of the working man's desire for security.' By a well-worn device of the political platform he associates me with an unnamed holder of such a view in a cruder and more easily denounceable form, and calls the point of view thus assigned to us 'effrontery.' I agree that it would be, but so far from 'reproving the working man' I had written down quite plainly, although I had no room to argue it, that 'the drive for these policies does not come from the general public, and least of all from the very poor who have an instinctive, inherited, distrust of state authority; it comes from the new clerisy.' I keep my 'reproof' for the 'new clerisy,' who conceal from the working man the price he will be made to pay in that essential personal freedom.

"Hence (my second example) I warn him never to confound together, as Dr. Lindsay does, the two very different things for which the same word, Security, is used. There is the security which comes from owning something, from property under a man's own hand. This is what professional men enjoy. It is different in kind from the security which is a promise of payments subject to conditions of conduct, to be judged by somebody else. When the dispensing authority is also over-seeing and exacting obedience in as many fields as the modern State does, the consequences of disobedience become increasingly serious.

High pressure salesmanship has sold many bad articles to the public in its time, largely by giving them attractive and quite misleading names. But there is something extraordinary when a man who has seen the State doing more and more all his life, and has also seen working class wages rise by a third for an hour's less work a day (vide Beveridge) concludes that nevertheless the resulting society of 1939 strikes the British public as so bad that if forced to choose between it and totalitarianism, 'they will, however reluctantly, choose totalitarianism.'

It is not my job to enter the lists at this point. The question whether in fact in the modern world property is or can be the guarantee both of security from want and of our liberties will have to be debated further at a later date.

TRADITION IN PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

I would like to take up a question raised by the extension of State planning, which seems to me to be peculiarly the concern of Christians. When we have our Health and Security schemes, our Town and Country Planning and all the rest, are we going to find that there is an immense growth of purely impersonal relationships between people, so that more and more personal matters are dealt with on forms, in card indexes, over post office grills by bureaucrats who regard you as a name on a card, and technical experts who see you as a medical or social "case"?

It is possible to argue endlessly about what might happen, and about what has happened on the continent, more particularly in Germany and Russia. What is more important for us is to examine the tradition which we have already created in this country, and to bend our efforts to improve and extend it without destroying certain unwritten values in it which are peculiarly English and which are perhaps a greater safeguard against bureaucratic tyranny than a system of economic checks and balances. We have in this country a strong belief in personal relationships, not only as good in themselves, but as a sound basis for getting a job well done, and on the whole we have a happier knack in dealing with them than most nations. Our most successful war films, for example (and they are probably among the best films ever produced in this country), are those of the type of "In Which We Serve" and "The Way Ahead," which deal not with the exploits of individual heroes, but with the delicate adjustments between persons in a group. We have in the past, in the administration of our social services, preserved a strong element of personal relationship in the dealings of public servants with those whom they serve.

In the second place we believe in the value of voluntary effort. No country in Europe has so great a wealth of voluntary organizations, both of the type in which the better-off assist the poor and of the much larger class like the co-operative movement, organized for self-help. It has been our custom not to allow the state to take over voluntary effort unless there is an overwhelming case for doing so on grounds of efficiency or of extension, and, of equal or greater importance for the future, we have succeeded in preserving many voluntary elements within the state system. But there is danger that while we are trumpeting the achievements of the past and asserting our undying belief in the principles of personal relations and voluntary effort, the forms in which

they are embodied may be disappearing from under our very noses. Values of this kind are probably safest when we are least conscious of their existence, but once they have been forced on our consciousness and we have to do by deliberation what we once did by instinct, then our way forward is for a number of people in this country to see clearly where, within the organization of the state, personal values are being preserved and voluntary effort and free criticism are maintained.

STATE CARE FOR MOTHER AND CHILD

No branch of our social service provides a better example of the preservation of the personal relationships and of voluntary effort within the public system than the organization under local authorities and the Ministry of Health of the care of mothers and babies.

The ten years before the war saw a great drive to improve the care given to mothers before, during and after the birth of their children. As the result of this work, and of improvements in housing and nutrition going on at the same time, thousands of lives both of mothers and of babies have been saved, and an untold amount of deformity, suffering and anxiety has been averted.¹ In 1938, in addition to provision made in hospitals, 7,119 midwives were employed, more than half by voluntary associations, and one-third by local supervising authorities, for maternity nursing and midwifery in the homes of the people. The means by which specialist attention could be brought to urgent cases were greatly improved: between 1930 and 1938 ante-natal clinics increased all over the country at the rate of about a hundred a year, and the number of mothers attending them doubled. There was a corresponding increase in child welfare clinics, and in the number of health visitors, who paid in the year 1938 something like eight million visits to babies and children under five in their own homes. Schemes for extensive development, particularly in buildings, were cut short by the war, but even so public confidence in these services is so well founded that their work has increased. The infant mortality rate last year reached its lowest record.

A LOCAL EXAMPLE

Here is the set-up of a single London borough before the war: it cannot be taken as typical of all areas in England, but it gives some sort of a standard and a clear picture of the dovetailing of public and voluntary services. The borough employed a Medical Officer and three assistant doctors, whose principal concern was with maternity and child welfare work. They were supported by the services of part-time medical officers and consultants. There were nineteen health visitors engaged in maternity and child welfare work. Of the seven infant welfare centres five were run by the borough and two by voluntary agencies: all were visited by the medical officers. Two midwives were employed by the District Nursing Association and three others by the L.C.C., which also supplied hospital and other medical services. The M.O.H. reported that it was "only in rare instances that a woman does not get ante-natal care." There were home helps to assist mothers during the first weeks of a baby's life and five day nurseries.

¹ The infant mortality rate in this country was 128 per 1,000 live births in 1900-1910, 72 in 1921-1930, 66 in 1931, 53 in 1938, 49 in 1942; cf. New Zealand 69 in 1900-1910, 48 in 1911-1920, 32 in 1931, 29 in 1941.

All this work depends for its success on the right personal relationships between patients and staff. The medical consultations at the welfare centre are carried out in just the same way as they would be in the doctor's private consulting-room: the mothers seek the advice of the health visitor when in any difficulty. These health visitors visit every home where a birth has been notified to the M.O.H., and by house-to-house visitation seek out newcomers to the district. Relationships are improved by the fact that mothers regard the service as something which they have indirectly helped to pay for and not as charity; on the other hand, the work of voluntary helpers in the clinics in running sewing classes and giving special help to individual mothers is of inestimable value. In many cases the existence of the clinic as a place of meeting has enabled mothers to organize activities for themselves. Next to the skill and care, the most important value of this work is the confidence given to the young mother in finding that she is not alone.

The time when infant welfare work was what "ladies" did in their spare time for "the poor" is passing. "Yesterday's idea that the social services, whether in the realm of social security, education, health or housing, are intended only for the 'necessitous poor' has given way to to-day's idea that services provided by the community should meet the needs of all."¹ A hopeful feature of infant welfare work is the increasing use of these facilities by middle-class parents.

A SUGGESTION FOR STUDY

There is a strong tendency for Christians in their individual reading and in their corporate study in the churches to do what the Communists do—to take their information and their opinions on secular matters from books, pamphlets and study outlines emanating from "coloured" sources—church organizations and religious publishing houses. They are probably accurate enough, their trouble is that they are not, and never can be, local enough. Informed *local* opinion is urgently needed. If we do not know how our local social services are run, it is not much use for us to enter into debates on national planning.

It would be an adventure for some group intent on studying, for instance, the Christian conception of the family to take as its text book the annual report of the Medical Officer of Health for their own locality, and supplement it with the wider picture given in the Report of the Ministry of Health on the state of public health in 1938, which was a stock-taking year.² It is a mine of relevant material, and the introduction contains a discourse on the nature of human progress (garnished with references to Spengler and John Wesley) which would provide theological arguments for several sessions. Indeed theological argument takes on a new relevance in a practical context of this kind.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

¹ Broadsheet on "Medical Care for Citizens," published by P.E.P. (June, 1944), 16 Queen Anne's Gate, London, S.W. 1.

² Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health for the Year 1938. H.M.S.O., 3s. 6d.

THE EDUCATION OF ALL ADULTS

By EDWIN BARKER

The Education Bill requires Local Education Authorities to prepare schemes for the development of adult education, and suggests that in doing so the voluntary agencies be called into consultation. In some parts of the country the Universities, in collaboration with the L.E.A.'s, the Workers' Educational Association and other voluntary bodies, have convened conferences to give preliminary consideration to this matter. Under the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Professor R. H. Tawney, and other experienced men and women of the adult education movements, national policies and plans are being worked out, and machinery designed to make them effective.

Alongside all these measures an educational undertaking on a scale not hitherto experienced in this country has developed in the Services. This will expand even further as our armies spread themselves over the world and still further as demobilization becomes a real factor in the national life. The adult education requirements of the Education Bill, the war and the post-hostilities situation, and the accelerated experience of the past few years give rise to a series of important and urgent educational concerns which will demand attention, and by no means the least of these is the determination of the scope of adult education.

WHAT IS ADULT EDUCATION ?

What is to be included in, and what excluded from, adult education "proper"? At what point does informal education cease to be a serious educational factor and become mere light diversion and entertainment, unworthy of the long traditions of adult education? Or, more pointedly, to what objective does informal education rightly lead? To systematic class study? To University education? Or can it be an end in itself, with its own objectives, policies and methods? What standards are to be set, and who is the best judge of these? Answers to these questions will vitally affect the plans drawn up by L.E.A.'s for submission to the Board of Education. What follows are tentative answers suggested by experience of the Y.M.C.A. Education Department during this war, modified by reflection on 100 years of Y.M.C.A. educational history, and by some knowledge of the experience and opinions of other people at work in this field. It would be well to underline the word "tentative," for the only claim that is made for these observations is that they merit consideration.

Adult education received a tremendous stimulus during and following the war of 1914-18. Trends which were apparent before 1914 became the characteristics of rapidly expanding movements throughout the country. Two of these characteristics are relevant to the present discussion. The first is the democratic structure of classes and groups of classes. Students choose their tutors and the subjects they wish to study, and they contribute a class fee and frequently become members of the organization which arranges to meet their demands. The organization which results is itself also democratically controlled, and, in addition to planning the further extension of its class work, it provides occasions on which its members can express their views on general educational and related issues. The second characteristic is perhaps best described by saying that the intention was to expand the Universities to include an ever increasing number of men and women most of whom would never have an opportunity of becoming full-time University students. Short terminal courses, one-year classes, and three-year tutorial classes bore the University hall-mark, and were extensions of University teaching work. The bulk of this expansion was due to the W.E.A., in close collaboration with Universities and their departments and delegacies for extra mural and extension activities. Adult education regulations were devised by the Board of Education to support and, in part, to finance this development, and a democratically controlled W.E.A. has become the University for leaders in working-class circles of all kinds, and has in its turn produced this kind of leadership.

One further point should be noted. The subjects studied were strictly non-vocational. The result of this was that vocational studies were arranged by L.E.A.'s in their technical and art schools. There has, therefore, been a divorce between the vocational and the non-vocational in adult education to the detriment of both and resulting in serious cultural loss to the community. It is also worth while noting that at the end of the last war, when the Army took over complete control of its own education and said, "Thank you and Good-bye" to the Y.M.C.A. Universities Committee, it too became strictly vocational and taught skills without much cultural content or social meaning—a further loss to the nation.

We have now sufficient experience of adult education of the type developed by the W.E.A. and the Universities to mark its great achievements, and to know something of its limitations. The line of development is clearly marked, and standards readily defined. Students are secured, and interest aroused by any means within the power of the movement concerned. Popular lectures, short series of popular lectures, conferences, social occasions, contacts with trade unions, co-operative societies, churches, fellowships, clubs, or any grouping of men and women—all these

and many other methods are used. The objective is systematic class teaching and learning, preferably covering a period of three years, and the standards are those of the University. In some cases the students do in fact proceed to the University. Vigorous, but not very numerous, offshoots are the residential colleges for working men and women, in some instances closely connected with Universities.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER NEEDS

Experience would seem to indicate that this approach to adult education has three not unrelated limitations. The first is that it has one main method—the class—with regular meetings at fixed times, with registers, essays, systematic discussion and tutorial work. It is, therefore, bounded by those who are willing to adopt this method and who can be persuaded to learn through this particular discipline. This is a severe test, but an essential one in this kind of education. This leads to the second limitation. The kind of leaders trained for working-class movements by this method of separation are selected in the light of a tradition hitherto intended to produce an entirely different type of leader—commonly known as the “aristocratic” type. Clearly the demands of a popular adult education movement upon the Universities may modify the University tradition—and there are not wanting signs that this is happening; but there are other signs that the adult education movements take on the characteristics of Universities, some of which are alien to their purposes. The third limitation arises from the separation of vocational and non-vocational adult education, a matter of great seriousness which is receiving the attention of educationalists, presenting problems which most of them appreciate but none has yet solved.

There is no doubt that by various measures, which are being canvassed at the moment, the number of people brought into this type of adult education is still capable of increase, but it is doubtful whether by these means alone a really popular movement can ever develop. An *élite*, though a substantial one, still remains a minority and it is at least arguable that other methods and standards need to be devised in order to reach larger numbers of people, and to reach them at points of critical judgment in their own experiences. In other words, something further is needed which does not pose problems and elucidate issues as seen from a University, and which does not tackle problems thus seen by methods appropriate to a University. We require an approach which takes the concerns which appear real to large numbers of people—however slight and trivial these may at first seem, and which treats them by methods common to the multitudes, however strange to those steeped in ancient lore. These two approaches are not as separate as may

appear at a glance and, as will be shown, everything would be lost if they ever gave rise to two distinct movements. Systematic class work can constitute an objective for those involved in informal education. The contention here is that it must by no means be the sole objective, nor must class work dominate informal education and its methods.

INFORMAL EDUCATION—WAR-TIME EXPERIMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Experience of informal education is diverse and, in recent years, unco-ordinated. For this reason reference will be made only to the work undertaken during this war by the Y.M.C.A. It is, of course, fully appreciated that, extensive as this is, it is only a part of the total field of new and old experimentation and that conclusions drawn from it need checking with other people's experience. Many of the problems so far unsolved by the Y.M.C.A. may already have been tackled by others, and solutions found. The war chokes up so many channels of communication.

Early in the war we were faced with two educational problems—apart from that of meeting clamant demands for lectures and teachers. The first of these was presented by small, and often isolated, detachments of men on Anti-Aircraft and Balloon Barrage sites. Each group was very mixed educationally, ranging from the nearly illiterate to the professional student. Each group had to be tackled as a whole, for even had classification been desirable it was literally impossible with such small numbers. Whoever visited the sites for educational purposes was a guest, and if he failed he was not invited again. Some of these are conditions which may and do obtain in civilian circumstances (in a factory, for example), and the methods devised to meet this situation have relevance to post-war work. The audience is ready made, small, isolated and very mixed, and the problem is that of capturing and sustaining the interest of every member of the group in a progressive educational activity.

The second main problem was presented by equally mixed, but much larger, groups of men and women who crowd into Y.M.C.A. centres in war time. How could they, or a substantial proportion of them, be encouraged to join in an educational process, and their interest awakened and maintained? In both circumstances the audience is judge and jury. In the first the visitor may not be asked again, and in the second, the Service man can walk out. He is not paraded to Y.M.C.A. educational activities. There are innumerable parallels in civilian life to the crowded Y.M.C.A. centre in war time, and methods relevant to the one have some significance for the other.

INFORMAL EDUCATION IN THE SMALL GROUP

Consider first the small, mixed group. The straight lecture is out of the question. Attention must first be roused and focussed. Then the separate interests and experiences of the members of the group must be discovered and taken up, and this must be done in such a way as to satisfy the individual and to move him on a stage in reflecting on his own experience, and at the same time it must not bore the others. Finally, what is started must be followed through in some way. The most effective way we have found of doing all these things at once is the "Screen Competition," designed in the first instance by R. W. Pilkington of Cambridge. This involves the use of a small lantern, and of slides specially made for the purpose, for the whole equipment must be easily portable. The lecturer chooses a subject and prepares his notes as for a lecture in the first place. He then takes each main point he wishes to have discussed and thinks out a series of questions which will lead to such a discussion. Next he selects from his slides, pictures which will enable him by easy stages to lead up to his questions. The slides are not to illustrate a lecture, but are pegs on which to hang discussion, beginning by questions asked by the lecturer and answers given by members of the audience. The audience is split up into groups of two or three people, and tickets are given to the groups as they answer questions correctly or volunteer useful pieces of information. The tickets are counted at the end, and sometimes a small prize is given to the winners. This is by no means essential and has no effect either way. The subject of discussion and study is not usually announced in advance.

As distinct from most discussions and lectures, tangents are encouraged. It is up to the lecturer to return to his theme, after going off at tangents, without making sharp breaks in the sequence of thought of members of his audience. For example, you wish to have some discussion on Church and State relationships. Having prepared your material in the manner outlined above, you can begin by slipping in a picture of Major Quisling, asking, "Who is that?"—the first sentence in any session is always a question, and the second, therefore, comes from the audience. Having got your audience to tell you who it is, you can then ask: "What do you mean when you call a man a Quisling?" This leads on to Fifth Column, traitors, treatment of spies, etc., etc. Then you may say, "But there are Quislings in nature," slipping in a slide of a caterpillar in which the Braconid fly has laid its eggs—and you then spend a few minutes chasing Quislings in nature. You return by saying, "But who is opposing Quisling in Norway?" The answer comes back, "The Church and the teachers." You can then discuss Church and State, Church and teachers, Niemöller, etc., etc., by

pressing your questions and sandwiching in information as you do so. Then you may put in a picture of Eros in Piccadilly Circus, "To whom is it a memorial?" "It is in the centre of theatreland. Here is the centre of London's older theatreland," putting in a picture of Southwark. Your questions can then lead you to Harvard, to Wren, to Shakespeare, to Chaucer, to Canterbury, to Thomas à Becket, or to the abdication of Edward VIII and so back to Church and State—and so on. If you count up the number of subjects touched on so far you will see that there is a good chance that you have captured the interest of most members of your group, and some of them will already have shown you where their special interests lie by comments and questions which the informality of the proceedings encourages.

By these means it is possible to give a whole series of lectures on one subject carrying every member of the group with you as you go. You can help men to focus their thinking, the square of light on the screen or wall is an asset, and you can get them to reflect on their own experience and make sense of it, and reach decisions about it, all of them proceeding along different routes, at different rates, in the same group. I find that teams and tickets quickly disappear from the process, though they are invaluable assets to start off with; discussion starts up, and even the picture from which it started is forgotten, though it is fatal to switch off the lantern and put on the lights.

The method has innumerable applications and variants, but the above account is perhaps sufficient to bring out its salient features. We have scores of lecturers and teachers, and thousands of home-made slides in use at present. It is, of course, a highly skilled job, and training is essential to prevent it deteriorating into a Quiz or a straight lecture.

THE LARGE GROUP

The same method can be used in a crowded canteen or club. All that is necessary is to walk in at a peak period, or just before, start erecting your lantern and someone will come to help. Soon you have half a dozen men fitting up the screen, shading the lights and being generally useful. Then you slip in a picture: "What is that?" Somebody answers, and you are well away. The group grows and swells, and before long you are in the midst of a discussion. After that it's up to you both to keep the party going and to fix up another.

This is supported by travelling libraries, by the sale of Penguins and Pelicans, by wall charts, maps, diagrams, exhibitions, and sometimes it is preceded by all or some of these things. At appropriate times half-day schools are arranged in consultation with the

men, and group competitions based on papers containing questions requiring knowledge of fact and expression of considered opinion are developed. A similar approach to music and art has been elaborated on a very wide scale.

INFORMAL METHODS IN ART

Our work on art also illustrates an attempt to solve another problem. Here we introduce young artists into our centres, i.e. we arrange for one of them to walk in at a time when the place is partly full, clear a small space at a table, and start drawing, or painting, if possible using one of the men as a model. Interest is aroused at once and soon you have a number of men sketching and painting in the main canteen under the tuition of the young artist. He shows them reproductions of other people's work and so carries on the process of education. After a while he secures a class. The main danger now is that he will go off to another room and devote his whole attention to the specially interested. This is prevented by choosing another night of the week for the class and continuing his weekly visit to the main canteen, aided and abetted now by the members of his class. Before long you can get three or four groups working in the main room, those conducting them meeting weekly with the artist, to map out the next stage. In this way, and by various modifications of this approach, special and general interest is maintained.

The story is an almost endless one. Music alone occupies a high proportion of the time and energy of our educational staff, and we have similar ventures in the realm of handwork, the cinema, drama and elementary science.

THE PURPOSE OF INFORMAL EDUCATION

Sufficient has been said, perhaps, to indicate the angle of approach and the conditions and standards we set ourselves. To the superficial and casual observer these innumerable activities may look like a series of beginnings with no tidy endings, and to some extent they are, because of war conditions. They are not necessarily a series of beginnings interminably repeated. Each event has to be complete in itself, but nevertheless a part of a series, in order to be of value to the men who can only come once, and to the man who can attend repeatedly. In peace time these conditions will be appreciably easier and will make possible informal but continuous work.

Informal education has, therefore, techniques and purposes of its own. Its purpose is to help as large a number of people as possible to reflect on their experience with a view to improving on their practices. It could well begin with house furnishings, houses, town

planning, listening to music, looking at pictures, developing a critical attitude to feature films, and its methods will appear slapdash, crude, competitive and even clownish to those familiar with classes and lectures. Its methods have to fit circumstances where classification of students is impossible. Its watchwords are Stop! Look! Listen! Think! Decide! Act! used in a variety of settings, helping people to make judgments on everything from the newspapers they read and the shops they use, to the vote they cast, and the movement they join—and maintaining strictly educational standards meanwhile.

THE INDISPENSABLE LINK

It is apparent to those of us who are involved in this work that it would be disastrous to separate it from that hitherto considered as adult education. Much informal activity leads to classes, and those involved in class work are essential to informal enterprise. More, not less, attention has to be given to informal work than to formal work. It presents great educational problems and it can so easily slip into becoming a series of good shows without direction. It cannot, however, be conceded that it must be measured and tested by the standards and methods of formal education. It must work out its own.

The L.E.A.'s in making their plans for the future of adult education in their areas should; therefore, include their own Technical Colleges, the work of bodies such as the W.E.A. and the Universities, and that of the more informal agencies in one master plan, ensuring interplay between the parts without the domination of any one part over the rest. It would appear that they are inclined to do this, and if this inclination becomes a policy we can look forward to a new period of expansion of the adult education movement.

It is to be hoped that readers of this Supplement will not mistake the opinions expressed above for those held officially by the Association I serve. They may or may not be. They are expressed as my own. By the same token I must state that it is not a report of the educational work of the Y.M.C.A., for much has been omitted in order to make one simple point.

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